

Joy of ST. JOHN'S UCC



Lenten Opportunities

BEGINNING FEBRUARY 22

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22. Ash Wednesday reminds us of our own mortality and our need for God. This year we will again offer drive-thru and walk-up ashes. Ashes will be available from 12 - 1PM and 5 - 6PM. The Imposition of Ashes is not widely used in the United Church of Christ but is a meaningful ritual in many other denominations. The ashes are a sign that our physical bodies came from dust, and to dust they will return.

Our Lenten journey will continue each week with a brief reading which will be emailed with the Weekly Digest (paper copies will also be available). Everyone is welcome to meet each Sunday in the Prayer Room following our morning worship service to discuss the reading for the week. The first reading will be available on Ash Wednesday.

Invitation

COMBINED WORSHIP FEBRUARY 12

St. John's UCC has been invited to worship with Westminster Presbyterian Church on Sunday, February 12. We will join Westminster at their location, 2301 Ridgeway Road, Jackson at 10 AM.

The congregation of Westminster Presbyterian is in a season of discernment; they are considering partnering with another church. Our acceptance of this invitation is a show of our support and encouragement during their discernment process. We plan to return the invitation to them this spring when the Westminster congregation will be invited to worship with us here on Mechanic Street.

Please plan to attend on February 12 as we worship with our extended Christian family. The service will also be available on Zoom; watch for the link in the Weekly Digest.

Spring Retreat

PLANNING CONTINUES FEBRUARY 28

Our retreat will be held June 2-3 at Camp Desales. Our next planning meeting will be February 28 via Zoom. Mark your calendars now for this special faith-building event. More to come!



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From the Pastor's Screen

LIFECYCLES

Churches have life cycles. They are born and they grow. Sometimes growth is exponential, and a church plants another church. This happened often in the late 20th century as many downtown churches planted suburban churches following the geographic move of their members. For a time, churches flourished.

Picture a bell curve. The first section is "launch." The top of the bell curve is "sustained health." Then down the bell we go, until we reach what some call "life support." The remaining members are unable to financially, physically and emotionally support the ministry of their beloved church and need to make difficult decisions about whether to stay open or close their doors.

Every church has seasons. There are times of formation and growth, and there are times of nostalgia and maintenance. Researchers report that more than 80% of congregations report their status on the declining side of the bell curve.

This presents a unique opportunity. At one time churches were planting other churches, but now congregations are joining together. Why should fifty people support an oversized building with paid staff, when down the street there are three other congregations in the same place on the bell curve? What if they all joined together in what we call "multi-denominational joint witness churches"? What's that?

We know what "multi-denominational"

means: two or more churches utilize the same space but maintain their identity. These churches share common theology, mission and geography. They may have partnered in mission work and special events in earlier stages of church life. "Joint witness" reflects this combination of theology, social justice and outreach.

Joint witness churches do not merge; they simply share space, staff, resources, and missions. They may rotate their Sunday worship services too. One Sunday may feature a Presbyterian service, and the next week the congregations may worship UCC-style, and another Sunday the service may be American Baptist. Everyone worships together but each congregation maintains its identity. They may even maintain their own part-time ministers.

Joining together is an opportunity we can't afford to miss. Imagine making new friends, experiencing new ways to worship, and gaining momentum in missions. Imagine opening our doors and our hearts to congregations who have left their own sacred space to share ours. It's the reversal of the church plant. It lifts congregations from the life-support stage of the bell curve.

And it challenges us to share. Are we ready to truly practice living as the Beloved Community? Are we ready as the people of God to share our resources, our classrooms, and our sanctuary with other Christians? Are we willing to share our Sunday worship? Will we loosen our grip on our building?

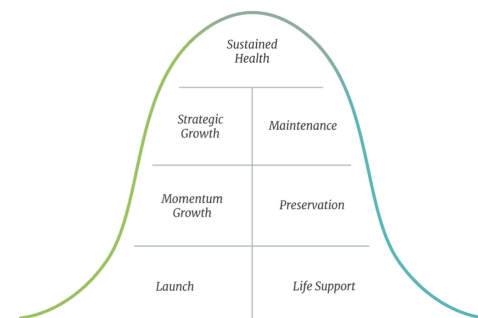
Or do we miss the opportunity for new life ... and stay on life-support? I think Jesus would tell us to open our doors -- and our hearts.



And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NSRV

CHURCH LIFE CYCLE



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February Birthdays

TIME TO CELEBRATE

- 3 - Philip Houser
- 5 - Spencer Parker Bush
- 7 - Clifford Schuler
- 7 - Jenny Vowler
- 8 - Ron Middlebrook
- 10 - Norm Richmond
- 12 - Barbara Parks
- 15 - Earnie Ramadan
- 21 - Nick Schroeder
- 22 - Craig Brush
- 27 - Christine Schroeder



Special Dances

FEBRUARY 25 AT 7 PM



Our Special Needs Dances continue under the leadership of Linda Miller and her team. The Valentine Dance will be February 25. Help is needed for decorating before the event and clean up afterward. Snacks and monetary donations are also appreciated. If you would like to help, call the office.

Community Dinner

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Cooks and servers wanted! Our next free Community Dinner features soup and sandwiches on Tuesday, February 21 at 6 PM. If you can help prepare, please arrive by 5 PM. If you can serve, we'll be ready for you by 5:45 PM.

Many thanks to the United Center for funding these events. Mark your calendar and join us!

Welcoming Our Church Council

2023 COUNCIL MEMBERS

Congratulations to our incoming and remaining council members. During our Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29, the following slate of nominees were approved:

- President - Gary Reasoner
- Vice President - David Chesney
- Treasurer - Richard Poor
- Secretary - Miriam Brown Dorsey
- Financial Secretary - Albert Steck
- Building/Grounds Lead - Carl Robinson
- Outreach Lead - Vickie Steck
- Social Justice Lead - Michele Wilson
- Ministry Lead - Caroline Zangwill
- Delegate - Connie Williams-Moodie
- Delegate - Jim Benedict
- Alt. Delegate - Miriam Brown Dorsey

Thank you to Gene Johnson for his years of service, and to Harry Wilson for his role as Pastoral Support Team leader.

February Calendar

FEB 1 - UNITED CENTER FOR CARING MEETING 12 NOON

FEB 5 - WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION 10:30 AM
NHL TUTORING 3:30 PM

FEB 7 - NHL MEETING 10:30 AM

FEB 8 - COUNCIL 3 PM

FEB 10 - LEAP 1:30-3:30 PM

FEB 11 - BRASS CLEANING 10 AM

FEB 12 - COMBINED WORSHIP 10 AM AT WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN, 2301 RIDGEWAY ROAD JACKSON

FEB 17 - FOOD PANTRY AND BABY SPRINKLES 10 AM-12 PM

FEB 19 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM
GUEST PREACHER EVELYN BOOK STUDY 11:45 AM

FEB 21 - COMMUNITY DINNER

FEB 22 - ASH WEDNESDAY

FEB 25 - NATION OUTSIDE EVENT AT MLK CENTER 5-7 PM; SPECIAL NEEDS VALENTINE DANCE 7 PM

FEB 26 - WORSHIP 10:30 AM; LENTEN STUDY 11:45 AM IN PRAYER ROOM

FEB 28 - CENTERING PRAYER 5 PM SANCTUARY; 6 PM RETREAT PLANNING ZOOM

Samaritan Fund

BECOMING GOOD SAMARITANS

In January we had 6 requests for help with rent; 1 payment was issued. One person requested water bill assistance; 1 payment was issued. We received 5 requests for help with Consumers bills; 3 payments were issued. We received 1 request for help with a motel stay and 1 gas money request, which were referred to other agencies. There were 24 requests for emergency food; all 24 were given emergency food. Six participated in the Showers for Homeless program. Donations for the Samaritan Fund will be collected during Lent.

Food Pantry

COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

Our Community Food Pantry was held on January 21 and continues to serve families in need. Last month we provided 1500 pounds of food and served 75 individuals, representing 183 family members. We are so grateful for Carl and our faithful team of volunteers. The next Food Pantry will be Friday, February 17, from 10 AM to 12 PM.

MLK Center

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Nation Outside, Dungytrees, SJUCC and community partners will gather at the MLK Center on Saturday, Feb 25 from 5-7PM to showcase opportunities for returning citizens. We will be sharing information and distributing diapers.

LEAP

LEARNING ENRICHMENT AND ARTS

LEAP students, teachers, and volunteers will gather Friday, February 10, from 1:30-3:30 PM in the Social Hall at SJUCC. LEAP will be in session two Fridays per month through June 2, with several field trips planned. Grandparents are needed -- and you can be one! LEAP is funded by grants from the United Center for Caring.



Centering Prayer

FEBRUARY 28 AT 5 PM

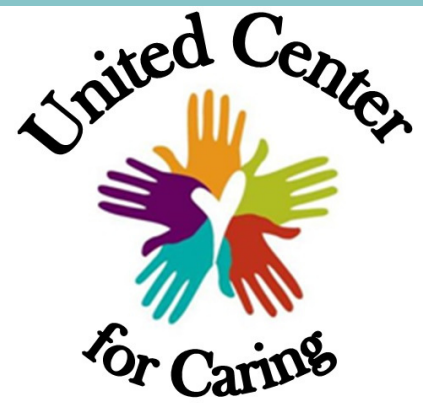
Centering prayer is silent meditation. Participants choose a word or phrase that reminds them of the Divine -- often words like "loving-kindness" or "mercy" are chosen. As we quiet ourselves, our minds start to wander. When that happens, we return to our sacred word and our breathing. Let's try this together in our sanctuary on February 28 at 5 PM. After a brief teaching, we will pray silently for 15 minutes. Let's invite God to join us!

Baby Sprinkles

KIDS' CLOSET AND MORE

Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet provides clothing up to size 14, in addition to baby items, infant clothing, and diapers. Last month 23 families received items, serving 39 children.

We appreciate donations. Come see us in action on February 17 at 10 AM.



Be the Blessing

**SOMETHING
FOR EVERYONE**

Here's what you can do to
be a blessing:

- Invite friends to church
- Attend the Community Dinner
- Help with the NHL Initiative or LEAP
- Pray for our church every day
- Donate time or money to the Samaritan Fund or Food Pantry
- Bring donations for the Baby Sprinkles and Kids' Closet
- Volunteer to be an Usher
- Sign up for Coffee Hour
- Offer your musical gifts
- Notice who's missing from worship ... and reach out with love!



Rev. Judy Goodrow

260-668-9173

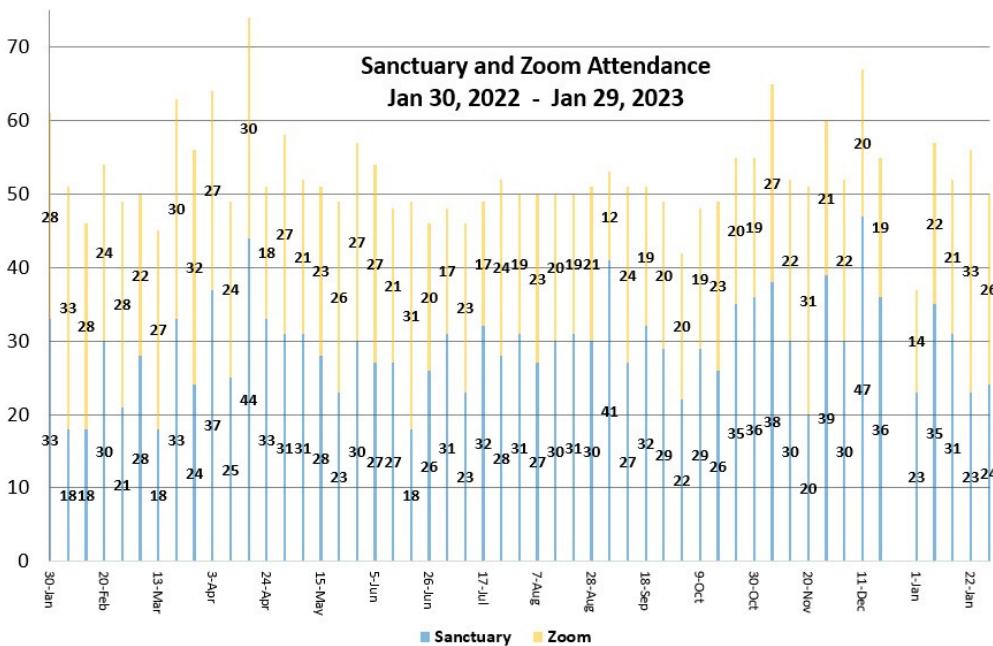
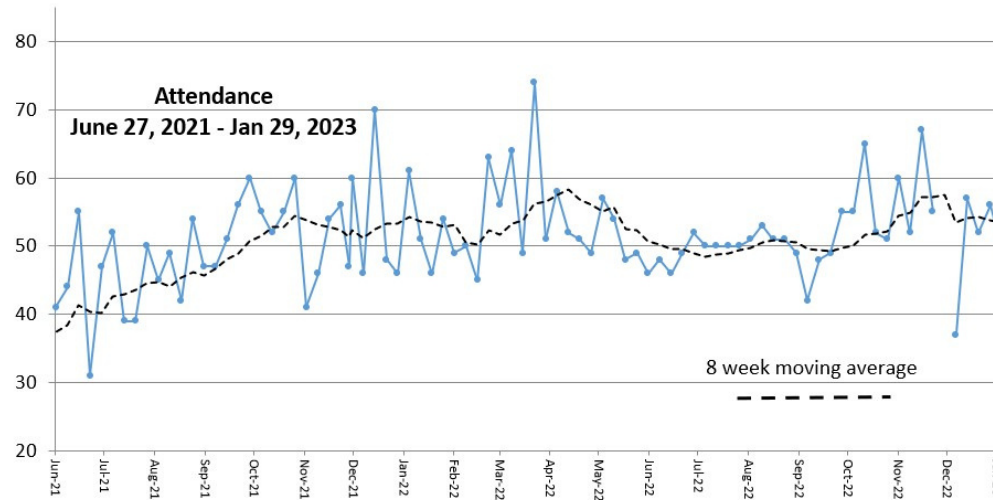
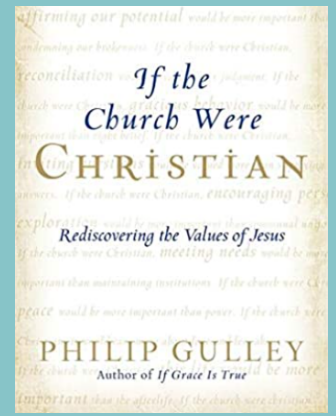
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If the Church Were Christian

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19 FOLLOWING OUR MORNING SERVICE

Our winter book study is *If the Church Were Christian* by Philip Gulley. Our concluding conversation will be Sunday, Feb. 19. Even those who haven't read the book can participate in this conversation. How does our church reflect the teaching of Jesus?



Note: \$12K of total 2023 Pledged Amount was donated in 2022 - will not appear on this chart

Council Update

The Church Council met January 11 and the following items were discussed:

- Twenty-four pledges have been received, totaling \$79,880
- The Nominating Team proposed four modifications to the constitution
- Budget team will meet
- The United Center for Caring purchased a new banner for events
- Payroll service will be contacted and services reviewed
- Spring retreat planning meetings are scheduled and Westminster Presbyterian may partner
- Restroom maintenance was discussed with costs under \$300
- A quorum will be 10 members

The Congregational Meeting was held January 29; the constitutional changes and council nominations have been accepted and approved.

Meeting minutes for past meetings are available in the church office. The next Council meeting will be February 8 at 3 PM in person and via Zoom.

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Encouraging people to

reach up to worship God,



reach in to strengthen faith, and

reach out in service to others.

St. John's

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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